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LEG 185.01: Introduction to Paralegal Studies

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**MISSOULA COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM
COURSE SYLLABUS for INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES**

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: LEG 185-AU18-Stanton
Introduction to Paralegal Studies

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

PREREQUISITES:

None

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Introduction to the paralegal career including ethical and professional standards. Overview of the American legal system, substantive areas of practice, legal analysis and investigation, law office administration and related terminology.

CREDITS AWARDED UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION:

3 Credits

FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Thomas H. Stanton, E-mail: Tom.Stanton@umontana.edu, Telephone: (406) 243-7850, Office and Meeting times: MC44 Faculty Office Suite, (northeast corner Business Administration Building, East Campus), before, between and after classes, or by appointment (see schedule on office door).

REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS:

The Paralegal Professional Essentials, Cheeseman and Goldman, Pearson Prentice Hall, current edition.

Black's Law Dictionary or other legal dictionary

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS:

As announced and/or distributed by the instructor.

Case annotations following chapter materials.

Online Supplement such as Case Book developed by instructor.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Apply American law to real or hypothetical fact situations.
2. Interact with other students in small groups requiring critical thinking and problem solving related to the American legal system and legal employment environment.
3. Describe the skills, abilities, and personal characteristics needed to become a successful paralegal.
4. Explain the organization of law offices and the interrelationships between attorneys and paralegals.
5. Articulate the ethical obligations of paralegals.
6. Formulate solutions to potential dilemmas arising out of employment in the legal field.
7. Be acquainted with major substantive areas of law and duties and responsibilities integral to those specialties.
8. Acquire a working legal vocabulary.
9. Analyze legal situations to distinguish relevant facts from informational sources.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Lecture, interactive topic discussion, chapter question answer and discussion, group projects, in-class projects, case reading and analysis, PowerPoint presentations, Online Supplement

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

Students will be graded in an objective manner for the areas listed below. These areas will be computed into a final grade using a point allocation system with the weight factoring specified. Attendance may be considered when a student falls on the borderline between grades. A plus/minus grade scale is NOT used in this course.

Tests 1, 2, Periodic Subject Mastery Quizzes—50 percent

Projects—10 percent

Final Examination—40 percent

GRADING SCALE:

A	100-93%
B	92-85%
C	84-76%
D	75-70%
F	Below 70%

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS TO DEVELOP PARALEGAL COMPETENCIES:

This is a first-year, first-semester course which provides an overview of the paralegal profession. Students will be expected to read text chapters and other reading assignments so they are prepared for class discussion. Class participation is encouraged, and students will be expected to respect the comments and input of other students. Students will prepare to interview guest speakers, and students will be expected to learn and converse using appropriate legal terminology.

DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE OF TOPIC AREAS WITH TIME INCREMENTS
(Subject to change as announced by instructors):

See also specific Fall 2018 calendar as created and distributed in class

Fall 2018

Draft Calendar: Introduction to Paralegal Studies

LEG 185; Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 to 1:50PM, Meeting Room MC 122

Week 1

Day 1: Introduce Syllabi, Class Overview

Overview of the Paralegal Studies Program (80 Minutes)

- Classes
- Goals of the program
- Introduction to students' personal responsibilities and excellence
- LEG 185 Introduction to Paralegal Studies Course Syllabus
- Legal dictionary
- Blackboard Online Supplement

Day 2: Text: Chapter 1: The Paralegal Profession

I. The Professional Paralegal (**CHAPTER 1 Overview (80 minutes)**),

Review (80 minutes)

- A. Introduction
- B. What is a paralegal?
- C. What do paralegals do?
- D. Opportunities for paralegals
- E. Career planning
- F. Role of paralegal
- G. National associations
- H. Qualifications of a paralegal
- I. Paralegal education in the United States
- J. Making a personal assessment and setting goals
- K. Paralegal skills

Week 2

Day 1: Introduction to Research Hypothetical

Day 2: Discussion of research Findings

Also: Text: Chapter 2: Ethics, Regulation, and Professional Responsibility

. Ethics, Regulation, and Professional Responsibility (**CHAPTER 2 (80 minutes)**),

(80 minutes))

- A. Introduction
- A. Unauthorized practice of law (UPL)
- B. Regulation of the paralegal profession
- C. Ethical rules and obligations
- D. The future

Week 3

Day 1: Text: Chapter 3: The Paralegal Workforce

- V. The Paralegal Workplace (**CHAPTER 3 (80 minutes), (80 minutes), (80 minutes)**)

- A. Introduction
- B. Arrangements and organization of law offices and firms
- C. Specialty practice
- D. Paralegal tasks and functions
- E. Administrative procedures in the law office
- F. Preparing your resume
- G. Interviewing for a job
- H. Selecting a specialty
- I. Assessing your background/skills/interests
- J. Career planning – selecting electives/preparing your resume/interviewing
- K. Arrangements and organization of law offices
- L. Administrative procedures in the law office

Day2: What do Actual paralegals Do?

Week 4

Day 1 and 2: Development of questions for Paralegals and Attorneys/Class visitors, Attendance by Class visitors

Week 5

Day 1: review for Test 1

Day 2: Test 1

Week 6

Day 1: Review Test 1

Day1 and 2: Text: Chapter 5: Sources of American Law

Sources of American Law (**CHAPTER 5 (80 minutes), (80 minutes), and (80 minutes)**)

- A. Introduction
- B. What is law?
- C. History of American law
- D. Sources of law in the United States
- E. Constitution of the United States of America
- F. Bill of Rights and other amendments
- E. Montana Constitution—history, comparison with U.S. Constitution

Week 7

Day 1 and 2: Text: Chapter 6: The Court System and Alternate Dispute Resolution

II. The Court System and Alternative Dispute Resolution (**CHAPTER 6 (80 minutes), (80 minutes)**)

- A. Introduction
- B. State court system
- C. Federal court system
- D. Jurisdiction of federal and state courts
- E. Alternative dispute resolution

Week 8

Tues: Constitution Day Part I

Thurs: Constitution Day Part II

Week 9

Day 1 and 2: Text: Chapter 7 Civil Litigation

VIII. Civil Litigation (**CHAPTER 7 (80 minutes), (80 minutes), (80 minutes)**)

- A. Introduction
- B. Pleadings
- C. Federal and Montana Rules of Civil Procedure
- D. Federal and Montana Rules of Evidence
- E. Local rules
- F. Discovery
- G. Pretrial motions
- H. Settlement Conference
- I. Trial
- J. Appeal
- K. Criminal law
- L. Federal and Montana Rules of Criminal Procedure
- M. Important cases in the American legal system

Week 10

Day 1: Review for Test 2

Day 2: Test 2

Week 11

Day 1: Tues: Review form Complaint, elements, preliminary drafting procedures

Day 2: Drafting: Complaints

Week 12

Day 1: Tues: Review form Answer, elements, preliminary drafting procedures

Day 2: Drafting: Answers

Week 13

Day 1: Text: Chapter 9: Interviewing and Investigation Skills

IX. Interviewing and Investigation Skills (**CHAPTER 9 (80 minutes), (80 minutes), (80 minutes)**)

- A. Introduction
- B. Interviews/Preparation
- C. Conducting the interview
- D. Moral versus ethical considerations
- E. Privileged communication
- F. Expert witnesses
- G. Investigating claims
- H. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
- I. Locating witnesses
- J. Interviews, investigations, and trials

Thurs: No Class: Thanksgiving

Day 2: Research Findings and Issue Spotting

Week 14

Day 1: Text: Chapter 4: Technology and the Paralegal

VII. Technology and the Paralegal (**CHAPTER 4 (80 minutes), (80 minutes), (80 minutes)**)

- B. Introduction
- C. Computer hardware
- D. Operating systems
- E. Applications software
- F. Presentation graphics programs
- G. Specialty application programs
- H. Electronic courtroom and paperless office
- I. Networks
- J. The Internet
- K. Online computer resources
- L. Formats of available information
- M. Electronic filing
- N. Computer and network security
- O. What's next?

- Discussion of Hypotheticals and research avenues
- Internet research

Week 15

Day1: Review for Final Exam

Day2: Review for Final Exam

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

An attendance sheet will be distributed at the beginning of every class. All students are expected to attend every class unless excused by the instructor.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPsA/index.cfm/page/1321>

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT:

If any student requires special consideration for any reason, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor to discuss the matter prior to any situation that might give rise to the special consideration requested. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS coordinator. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/> or call 406.243.2243 (voice/text).

MISSED/LATE COURSE WORK POLICY:

Missed or late course work can be turned in within 24 hours of the assignment due date. Late work will be graded with a maximum of 50 percent of points possible. No points will be awarded for missed or late course work turned in after 24 hours of the assignment due date. This policy can be amended at the discretion of the instructor upon proof of adequate justification. There is no option to make up missed in-class projects.

TESTING POLICY:

Make up tests or quizzes will not be given unless the instructor is contacted at least one hour prior to the scheduled time for the test or quiz. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor either in person, in writing, or by phone regarding an anticipated missed test or quiz.

CELL PHONE POLICY

Please turn off cell phones before class begins as they are distracting to faculty and other students. NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to physically disable offending communicating devices.